

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01
INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 IO-06 ACDA-10 USIE-00 PRS-01
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-----091105Z 084415 /11

O P 091042Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6281
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 04165

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PFOR WB GW UK US FR UR
SUBJECT: BRITISH PROPOSAL FOR ALLIED DEMARCHE TO
SOVIETS ON RUDOLF HESS

REFS: (A) BONN 4047; (B) BONN 3899; (C) BONN 3545;
(D) BONN 1212; (E) BONN 19026 (76);
(F) BONN 10294 (76) NOTAL

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE BRITISH HAVE PROPOSED A HIGH-LEVEL
ALLIED DEMARCHE TO THE SOVIETS SEEKING RUDOLF
HESS' RELEASE OR, FAILING THAT, AN AMELIORATION OF THE
CONDITIONS OF HIS IMPRISONMENT IN SPANDAU. ACTION
REQUESTED: GUIDANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN MARCH 8 TRIPARTITE MEETING AMONG ALLIED BONN
GROUP REPS, UK REP (HITCH) REPORTED THAT HE HAD BEEN
INSTRUCTED BY THE FCO TO PROPOSE ANOTHER JOINT ALLIED
DEMARCHE TO THE SOVIETS CONCERNING THE IMPRISONMENT OF
RUDOLF HESS. THE ALLIED APPROACH SHOULD HAVE TWO
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ASPECTS:

-- TO REQUEST THE SOVIETS TO RECONSIDER THEIR
OPPOSITION TO THE RELEASE OF HESS FROM SPANDAU AND,

-- IF THE SOVIETS REFUSE, TO ASK THE SOVIETS TO
CONSIDER WITH THE ALLIES WAYS OF AMELIORATING THE

CONDITIONS OF HESS' IMPRISONMENT.

2. IN THE LATTER REGARD, HITCH SAID THAT LONDON FELT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO REFER TO THE CONVERSATION WHICH TOOK PLACE BETWEEN ALLIED AUTHORITIES AND THE SOVIETS ON THE OCCASION OF THE LUNCHEON HANDING OVER CONTROL OF SPANDAU FROM THE FRENCH TO THE SOVIETS ON MARCH 1. AT THAT TIME, ACCORDING TO HITCH, THE BRITISH MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH HESS IS IMPRISONED, SUCH AS PERMITTING MORE FREQUENT VISITS AND PROVISION OF A RADIO OR TELEVISION SET TO THE PRISONER.

3. HITCH REPORTED THAT THE SOVIET PROTOCOL OFFICER, SHOKIN, HAD NOT REACTED UNFAVORABLY TO THE SUGGESTION. SPEAKING ON A PERSONAL BASIS, SHOKIN HAD SAID HE COULD SUPPORT SUCH MEASURES. (BOISSIEU REPORTED A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT VERSION OF THE DISCUSSION IN WHICH THE SOVIETS WERE SAYING THAT THEY COULD NOT RESPOND IN ADVANCE TO HYPOTHETICAL SUGGESTIONS. HOWEVER, THEY DID NOT REJECT THEM OUT OF HAND.)

4. HITCH STATED THAT LONDON WOULD PREFER SUCH A DEMARCHE TO BE MADE BY FOREIGN MINISTERS IN THE THREE CAPITALS. OBVIOUSLY, HE SAID, THERE WERE LESS GOOD FALLBACK ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING DEMARCHES BY THE ALLIED AMBASSADORS IN MOSCOW.

5. HITCH CONCLUDED WITH A REQUEST FOR SPEED IN
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CONSIDERING THE BRITISH PROPOSAL FOR A DEMARCHE. HE COMMENTED THAT THE FCO FELT ITSELF UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE ON THE SUBJECT PARTICULARLY FROM PARLIAMENT AND OPTICALLY WANTED TO BE IN A POSITION TO SAY IN PARLIAMENT THAT THE UK WAS PRESSING FOR HESS' RELEASE.

6. US REP SAID THAT HE WOULD OF COURSE REPORT LONDON'S PROPOSAL AT ONCE. HE SUGGESTED, HOWEVER, THAT IT MIGHT BE ADVISABLE TO SPLIT THE FIRST HALF OF THE PROPOSED DEMARCHE (RELEASE) FROM THE SECOND HALF (AMELIORATION). IF DONE AT THE SAME TIME, IT WOULD GIVE THE SOVIETS THE IMPRESSION THAT WE WERE NOT SERIOUS ABOUT THE RELEASE REQUEST. WE MIGHT MAKE THE FIRST PART OF THE DEMARCHE WITH A REQUEST FOR A PROMPT ANSWER. THEN, WHEN THE EXPECTED SOVIET REFUSAL IS RECEIVED, WE WOULD MAKE THE SECOND HALF OF THE DEMARCHE. WE SHOULD AT THAT TIME ALSO REMIND THE SOVIETS OF OUR PROPOSAL FOR A CHANGE IN THE PLAN FOR THE DISPOSITION OF HESS' REMAINS (REFS D, E, AND F).

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7. FRENCH REP (BOISSIEU) EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT NOW WAS NOT THE TIME FOR A FRESH DEMARCHE. HE SAID THAT WE WOULD GET NOTHING FROM IT, FOLLOWING AS IT DOES ON THE HEELS OF HESS' SUICIDE ATTEMPT AND THE RESULTING PUBLIC INTEREST. THE RUSSIANS WOULD HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE ALLIES WERE RESPONDING TO GERMAN "REVANCHIST" PRESSURES IN THE FRG, SUCH AS THE APPEAL FROM BUNDESTAG PRESIDENT CARSTENS.

8. BOISSIEU CONTINUED THAT WE WOULD BE ATTACKING THE RUSSIANS ON THREE FRONTS SIMULTANEOUSLY: RELEASE, AMELIORATION, AND THE DISPOSITION OF HESS' REMAINS. HAVING MADE THE DEMARCHE ON HESS' REMAINS, WE HAVE NOW GIVEN THE IMPRESSION WE ARE NO LONGER SERIOUS ABOUT RELEASE. IN ANY CASE, IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO USE THE SAME CHANNEL FOR ALL PROPOSALS. IF THE SOVIETS ARE AGREEABLE TO DISCUSS IN BERLIN IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CONDITIONS OF HESS' IMPRISONMENT, AS THEY APPEAR TO BE, WE SHOULD CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS THERE ON THAT ASPECT. AS FOR HESS' RELEASE, WE SHOULD WAIT THREE OR FOUR
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MONTHS FOR A NEW DEMARCHE. BOISSIEU AGREED, OF COURSE, TO REPORT THE BRITISH PROPOSAL TO PARIS AND SEEK INSTRUCTIONS.

9. COMMENT: BOISSIEU IS ALMOST CERTAINLY CORRECT IN BELIEVING THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD BE NO MORE FAVORABLE TO THE IDEA OF AN EARLY RELEASE THAN THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST. LONDON ALSO PROBABLY RECOGNIZES THIS, AND HITCH SPECULATES THAT LONDON'S REAL PURPOSE IN SUGGESTING A FRESH DEMARCHE IS TO TRY TO OBTAIN AGREEMENT ON EASING CONDITIONS OF IMPRISONMENT. LONDON'S VIEW PRESUMABLY IS THAT IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY AND TACTICALLY UNWISE TO TALK ONLY ABOUT THAT WITHOUT FIRST HAVING RENEWED THE REQUEST FOR EARLY RELEASE. WE TEND TO AGREE THAT IF ANY FRESH APPROACHES ARE TO BE MADE TO THE SOVIETS, IT WOULD BE BEST FOR THE RECORD TO BEGIN WITH ANOTHER REQUEST FOR EARLY RELEASE AND TO ALLOW A REASONABLE TIME FOR A REPLY BEFORE MOVING ON TO OTHER SUBJECTS. WE ALSO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT PINNING DOWN AGREEMENT ON THE DISPOSITION OF HESS' REMAINS IS THE MOST URGENT ITEM ON THE AGENDA, AND THAT SUBJECT SHOULD BE REOPENED IN PARALLEL WITH ANY DISCUSSIONS ON CONDITIONS OF IMPRISONMENT.

10. ACTION REQUESTED: REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO THE BRITISH PROPOSAL FOR A DEMARCHE TO THE SOVIETS AT FOREIGN MINISTER OR AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL.
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